

Contributors



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CATCHING UP
WITH COLE
CARDWELL

The cover story of last year's "Community" section was written by Cole Cardwell, seated, then a senior at Meridian High School. Cruising up and down North Hills Street used to be a favorite pastime, but these days Cole's cruising is limited to the pages of books. "I don't really miss it," said Cardwell, now a freshman majoring in business administration at Mississippi State University. "When I graduated and left Meridian, that pretty much put an end to my cruising days ... When I come home, I usually just visit my friends at their homes," he said. Cole's words of wisdom to current North Hills Street cruisers: "Enjoy it while it lasts."

FILE PHOTO

A significant historical
event for the world

Ashley Palmer submitted this "Braving Rights" story about her husband, 31-year-old Capt. Henry A. Palmer of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion. He was been in Iraq since July and is not scheduled to return home until February 2006.

"Thank you so much for doing this for our soldiers," she said. "It means the world to us left back home missing them to get a chance to brag on our guys!"

By Ashley Palmer
special to The Star

My husband, Henry Palmer, became involved in the ROTC program at the University of Mississippi. He completed his officer's programs and moved back to his roots in Meridian.

He is very grateful to be serving his community and country. He has always been proud of his hometown, Meridian, and wanted to make a difference.

With the 150th, he serves as the battalion maintenance officer and is a fine leader. As a civilian, he works at Community Bank as a bank officer — but when he received the call to serve,

he was proud to go defend his country and help spread democracy.

What there are doing is truly a significant historical event, not just for Iraq, but for the world. As his wife, I am so proud of my soldier. He is a true leader and our hero. We have two small children, Jackson, 4, and Olivia, 2. As hard as it is raising two children without him, I know that what he is doing is helping us all in the long run.

I hope the community that he is so proud of will get behind these guys because they are making such sacrifices to ensure the safety and freedoms we take for granted. We need to keep them in our thoughts and prayers daily ...

He has been away from home since July and is not scheduled to return until February 2006 ... our children ask for him each and every day. Twenty months away from home is a long time for anyone, but especially for someone with small children.

It was heartbreaking for us all to say goodbye, but I know the Lord will return him safely. He is a wonderful husband, father and soldier. I could not be more proud. God bless America and the troops that serve her!

Veterans: 'We wish we
could be there with you'

Sgt. Bobby Rushing, U.S. Army retired, is a veteran of the Korean War. He served in Korea from 1950-52 as a U.S. Army combat correspondent, writing accounts of what was going on for stateside newspapers as part of the 1st Cavalry Division.

Bobby also has the distinction of being a contributing writer to every one of The Meridian Star's reader-written Profile editions: "Profile 2001: By the People," "Profile 2002: The Fabric of America," "Profile 2003: A Sense of Place," "Profile 2004: Building Bridges" and now ... "Profile 2005: A Letter from Home."

Here is his letter to the troops.

Sincere greetings to my
American military heroes!

No. The news we see and read does not tell us all about you and all that is happening with you over there. Especially some of the good things that are taking place in those war-torn areas. Safe schools, clean water, hospitals and much more, we never, or rarely hear about.

Furthermore, we believe that you don't know all that is taking place in your hometown area. May this old veteran tell you about just a little that comes into his "fading" mind.

But first: Some of us veterans back home are now in our late 80s and early 90s, some in a younger group of 60s and 70s.

Yes, we do see you and read about you. We watch the television news and read *The Meridian Star*.

Oh, how many of us older veterans wish we could be there with you, some with the old M-1 rifles we shouldered in the 40s and 50s in the steaming hot, mostly rock or jungle Pacific Islands — and the hot and cold extremes in the countries of Europe and the deadly, freezing cold of Korea.

Then, how about we younger men carrying our M-16s, wading up to our waist in those rice paddies and jungles in the 60s and 70s?

We now watch all of you, showing determination, with your young physiques, full of stamina and good health as you battle through the sand and heat of places as Iraq and Afghanistan ...

As we consider you in those foreign lands, the main thing we remember and appreciate is that you are not battling these enemies on your hometown streets of East Mississippi and West Alabama.

What if it was in Quitman? Meridian ... or Livingston?

That's something we really don't want to think of, knowing that you who are fighting building-to-building, or cave-to-cave, would give your all to prevent that.

Yes, many of you are children of veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Some, possibly grandchildren.

As you have found out, you are facing an evil enemy. Crazy maniacs, insurgents they are called, who place no value on human life.

Geneva Convention? What is that to these land-mine and roadside bomb planters and beheaders of human life? They've never heard of this wartime agreement between countries.

Now, let's get back here at home.

As we drive down the streets and highways, we can see on the backs and sides of automobiles and trucks, bright, magnetic yellow and red-white-and-blue ribbons. Each has words exclaiming things like "Freedom Isn't Free," "Pray For Our Troops," "God Bless America" and "One Nation Under God."

Hundreds of your family members, friends and the general public are using this method to show their support for your courage and sacrifices in their behalf.

Also, there is a huge tree at Bonita Lakes in Meridian. It has hundreds of yellow and white ribbons attached to the branches and flickering in the sunlight. Each ribbon carries the names of some of you, purchased in your honor. Some others are in memory of military men and women who gave their lives.

A short piece further, the highway passes under a bridge on U.S. Highway 45 Bypass, which goes around Meridian. This huge, four-lane concrete structure has recently been dedicated as the "Military Order of The Purple Heart Memorial Bridge."

A huge, colorful sign on each side announces it as such. All who pass that way each day, surely seeing the signs, undoubtedly think of you and your efforts ... Some who pass are likely veterans of other wars where they earned Purple Hearts.

Many "love" packages have been sent your way from organizations in your hometowns. We hope you are receiving some of these, filled with items you said you needed.

Churches in this Deep South Bible Belt lift you up in prayer each week, asking God for your daily and return-home safety.

As a personal "coffee drinker" at a fast-food restaurant, I have noted on many occasions civilians going to the tables and booths of uniformed military personnel and "taking away" their food tickets to pay for them as a small act of appreciation for their service.

This writer is aged and not in too great of health.

I couldn't make it now there with you. However, this is now and I was then.

When you finish your tours, and extended tours, and come home to your parents, wives and children who are eagerly waiting and praying daily for your safe return, I hope you will arrive to a hero's welcome and not be met on an airstrip or ship dock full of anti-war demonstrators as happened during Korea and Vietnam homecomings.

I personally thank you, bless you in prayer, and appreciate what you do for me and for our country.

As your commander-in-chief, our president, always closes his speeches ... may "God Bless America!"

Just sign me "Bobby"



Rushing